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Before
The Committee on International Relations
May 5, 2005

Mr. Chairman,

Freedom House appreciates the opportunity to testify about this important legislation, which is focused on enhancing U.S. efforts to promote democracy in the remaining repressive states in the world.

In the last year, we have seen movement towards democracy in countries including Lebanon, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, and Georgia, many of which experts had written off as "stalled" authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes that were unlikely to see progress in democratization anytime in the near future. What we have learned from such countries is that experts are often wrong, and that civic forces can and will create possibilities for change when seemingly none exist.

Freedom House has been active in supporting the infrastructure of civic life and democratic values in many of these countries. We continue our work in a variety of regions and settings around the world to empower citizens in their effort to bring democracy to their countries and to deepen respect for human rights and the rule of law once tyranny falls and democratic transition begins.

As important, Freedom House conducts extensive research on the state of political rights and civil liberties through *Freedom in the World*, a global survey of press freedom, our *Nations in Transit* annual study focused on the former Communist countries, and the *Countries at the Crossroads* report that mainly looks at countries where progress toward liberalization has stalled.

I will draw on all of that experience in addressing the issues that the Committee has asked me to consider here today.

Freedom House Assessment of Current Trends in Democracy. The world has clearly witnessed a continued expansion in the number of countries which are rated Free (now 89 countries are Free, in 1974, only 41 countries were) and an overall decline in the number of Not Free countries (49 countries now are Not Free, a reduction from 63 countries in 1974). Nearly two thirds of all countries in the world are considered to be electoral democracies, and the number of countries we consider to be "worst of the worst," (those who get the lowest ratings in our survey, 7, 7) has declined from 21 countries in 1994 to 8 countries at the end of 2004.

However, while we continue to see overall gains each year, forward progress has clearly slowed since the unprecedented breakthroughs in the early 1990s, as you can see from the chart below.

FIW Edition	Total Countries	Electoral Democracies	Free Countries	Partly Free Countries	Not Free Countries
2005	192	119	89 (46%)	54 (28%)	49 (26%)
2000	192	120	85 (44%)	60 (31%)	47 (25%)
1995	191	114	76 (40%)	51 (32%)	64 (28%)
1990	167	69	61 (37%)	44 (26%)	62 (37%)

Moreover, despite overall global progress, far too many people continue to live under repressive conditions around the world. The Middle East continues to be the least free region in the world, despite the recent progress of elections in Palestine and Iraq, and increased civic activity in Lebanon, Egypt and other countries. Africa is the second least free region, and continues to be the most volatile; Free countries still represent only 11 out of a total of 48 countries. Outside of the Baltics, most countries in the former Soviet Union remain mired in authoritarian practices, although recent developments in Georgia, Ukraine and, potentially, Kyrgyzstan, have opened the door for democratic progress in these countries. China, which is attempting to open its society economically without allowing political accountability, continues to represent some 60% of the total global population living in Not Free societies. Horrendous abuses continue to occur in the world's most repressive regimes, including North Korea, Burma, Cuba, Turkmenistan, and Zimbabwe.

Even in those countries considered Free, we continue to see troubling deficiencies in rule of law, high levels of corruption, a tendency to clamp down on press freedom, and a lack of independence in the judiciary. This has contributed to growing disenchantment in, for example, Latin America, where public opinion measures indicate a growing discontentment with incomplete democratization in many of these countries.

Factors that Influence Political Change Today. The question of what ingredients spark political change and democratization is complex and varies from country to country, but I will highlight four that stand out from Freedom House's extensive database of analysis and practical experience working to support democracy advocates around the globe:

(1) Economic Factors. While not determinative, economics still matters in democratization. We have found a clear correlation between per capita income and the long-term success in consolidating democracy – countries with higher per capita income levels are more likely to succeed in their democratic consolidation, and conversely, the lowest income levels correlate with significantly lower levels of freedom. According to a 2003 Freedom House study, countries with an average per capita gross national income

above $1,500 are likely to have more success in completing and consolidating a democratic transition than those below that level.

This does not mean that poor countries have no hope for democracy, nor does it mean that we should just focus on poverty reduction and economic growth as the pathway to promoting democracy. Data on incomes and freedom levels also reveal that low-income countries are fully capable of establishing strong democratic practices and respect for civil liberties rooted in the rule of law (In 2003, we found that of the 128 countries with an annual per capita GNI of $ 3,500 or less, 38 are rated Free by the survey.) It suggests that where there is a smaller private sector, a very small middle class, where the levels of education is low, and where populations are predominantly rural, there are further challenges to the advancement of democratic reform. In such instances, other factors may take on greater import, for example, the role of enlightened leaders or other elites in creating opportunities for democratic change.

It is just as important to look deeper into the type of economic systems that exist, particularly their openness and connectivity to the rest of the world, as well as societal connections, and how they link to levels of freedom. A cursory comparison of Freedom House data and the fifth annual A.T. Kearney/Foreign Policy Globalization Index, for example, demonstrates that a correlation exists between the degree to which a country is connected economically, technologically, personally, and politically and the respect for political rights and civil liberties within that country.

2) The power of example. Clearly we can see that the "regional spillover" impact that was present in the waves of democratic transitions in the early 1990s still exists, even between regions. Global political learning has taken place on the civic level—Slovaks and Croats have transferred civic skills to Serbs, who in turn have helped inspire and guide the work of Ukrainians and Georgians, and even the Lebanese and Kyrgyz.

On the other hand, authoritarian leaders learn as well, as we can see from the Central Asian leaders and Russia, who are seeking ways to crack down on civic activism, especially on foreign support for such groups, to forestall similar events happening in their countries. In addition, the relative economic success of China, Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia is unfortunately seen as an alternative for countries that would like to enjoy the fruits of economic liberalization without losing political control.

In considering the power of example, it is important to take into account the important role that the media – particularly transnational and international media – plays in providing civic coalitions – and the general populace -- with the information and images that can either encourage or discourage struggles and hopes for change.

3) Impact of terrorism. In particular regions and countries, terrorism clearly has had a negative impact on freedom. Terrorist groups themselves, as does any government or group that uses violence, negatively impact individual freedom, with innocent civilians often bearing the brunt of attacks. The growth in terrorism can also be deleterious to the emergence and strengthening of peaceful civic forces within countries, either through

direct attacks or through triggering state repression and emergency decrees that provide obstacles to freedom of information, expression, association and other key factors that allow civic forces to operate effectively within societies. Also, some governments have used the threat of terrorism as an excuse for continuing or heightening their control over society and the larger polity, which is detrimental to future democratic changes.

If the United States and others seek to promote democratic values, including respect for rule of law, as an integral part of a counter-terrorism strategy, the negative impact that terrorism has on democracy promotion efforts can be somewhat mitigated. Unfortunately, too many cases still exist where the U.S. has not adopted an integrated strategy of fighting terrorist groups while promoting democratic practices. A number of countries with which the U.S. has established close relationships in the post-9-11 period pose particularly difficult challenges. These are countries that were poor performers on democracy measures *before* 9-11, which have been stuck in place or even regressed since that time – among them Uzbekistan, Sudan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Russia. If the U.S. security strategy is ultimately predicated on advancing democratic practice in such at-risk states, it is of paramount importance that we examine very closely whether our current policies—taken in total—toward these states are in fact bringing about desired results.

4) The foreign policy of democratic powers. In his influential book, *The Third Wave*, Samuel Huntington notes the important role that a change in the foreign policies of major democratic powers – mainly the foreign policies of the European Union (EU) and the United States – had on influencing political change in the late 1980s. While we know that internal forces are ultimately the agents of change in pushing for democratization, we have also learned that external support can make a difference.

A key issue today is whether the EU – through the new neighborhood policy or other mechanisms – can continue to provide concrete incentives to encourage further democratic reform. Through the Millennium Challenge Account, the United States can also provide similar "carrots" that may strengthen the position of reformers within stalled regimes to open up political space within those countries. At Freedom House, we have observed a considerable increase in interest in our evaluations of countries that are candidates – or potential candidates - for the MCA. These countries have expressed their willingness to improve and are interested in successfully competing for this new assistance.

It is vitally important therefore that the U.S. Government uphold the high expectations for funding of this innovative aid model so that it does not lose its potency before it even has the chance to make a meaningful impact. In general, the consistency and coherence of the current U.S. commitment to fighting tyranny is extremely important, and can make a significant contribution, but failure to follow through on the rhetoric – or to use it as a "figleaf" to act on other interests -- can also have an equally negative impact.

Factors that Make Countries Ripe for Democratic Transitions. I have already touched on some of these conditions in the discussion above, but would like to share a few thoughts on what factors make countries ripe for democracy efforts to take hold,

primarily by drawing on a new Freedom House special report that examines nearly 70 transitions from tyranny that have taken place over the last three decades.

1. Broad-Based Civic Coalitions. Our forthcoming study indicates that the emergence of broadly-based civic nonviolent coalitions is the most important condition and mechanism for creating democracy. According to our preliminary research of the nearly 70 countries where authoritarian systems have collapsed, 70 percent had significant pressure from grassroots movements – and this broad-based civic advocacy was a key factor in transitions that helped supplant authoritarian or totalitarian rule.

Top-down change is far less frequently the major force, something we should take into consideration as non-democratically elected governments in the Middle East and North Africa argue that they need to be the ones to control how political reform happens in the region. Similarly, it raises doubts about whether the Chinese path of economic opening with carefully controlled gradual political change orchestrated from the top will ever bring about genuine democratic progress in that society.

Moreover, the study confirms that the recent events in Ukraine, Georgia and Serbia are not unique in history. Indeed, movements using the strategy and tactics of civic nonviolent resistance— domestic boycotts, mass protests, strikes and worker actions, civic education campaigns, and student activism— have been a key ingredient to political change in a number of the countries we studied. What is critical is not just the importance of these factors to triggering transitions, but also the quality of democracy that results years after that transition. In the vast majority of non-violent, civic driven "people power" transitions, the level of freedom years after the transition is high. When top-down change occurs it tends to stop short of full-fledged democracy rooted in respect for human rights and the rule of law.

In other words, people power matters.

2. The Turning Point. No matter how many civic groups exist, how much alternative media is supported, or how many activists are trained in nonviolent resistance, successful change will not occur in most cases without a decisive shift in public opinion.

What triggers public protest? What leads hundreds of thousands and sometimes millions of people to take to the streets in nonviolent protest and long-term resistance?

- **Corruption.** One of the most important catalysts for protest is growing outrage over rampant corruption in the ruling elite. This, however, requires long-term efforts to investigate and inform the public about the machinations of their current and former leaders. Ukraine and Kyrgzystan are two interesting recent examples.

Nepotism is a subset of cronyism and corruption, but it breeds growing resentment and helps peel layers of legitimacy from the country's authoritarian rulers. Therefore, a focus on petty and grand corruption in closed and authoritarian states should be an important part of the strategy for democratic change.

To the extent that political leadership – that is to say those wielding power – rely on a narrow base of support in highly corrupt settings, suffering from cronyism and grand corruption, such leadership will devise a strategy to keep only these narrow interests satisfied. On the other hand, where wider democratic mobilization occurs, leadership must take into account the will of a larger segment of the citizenry, which can drive reform.

- **Economic Failure.** Economic failure is of course another factor that erodes the legitimacy of tyrants. But very often, protests also erupt in countries with growing economies (eg. Ukraine) or more typically in formerly fast growing economies where there has been a rapid economic reversal (Poland in the 1980s) or stagnation (the former USSR).

- **Struggle for national sovereignty and liberation.** In some cases, the struggle for national sovereignty becomes an important component of civic mobilization. This is the case in Lebanon's protest against Syrian hegemony this year; in Ukraine, where resentment of Russian interference in the Presidential election of 2004 was a contributing factor in the Orange Revolution's success; and in Poland in the 1980s, where opposition to Soviet hegemony was among the factors spurring the Solidarity movement.

- **Stolen elections.** Finally, one of the most important triggers is fraudulent elections. We live in a democratic world, where even tyrants are often required to go through the exercise of multi-candidate and multi-party elections to preserve a patina of domestic and international legitimacy. In many settings opposition parties play a nominal role, and rarely compete for power. In other settings, however, opposition forces often receive substantial support but are thwarted by electoral machinations that always leave them short of a majority. These are countries that some refer to as pseudo-democracies, dominant party states, and semi-democracies.

While critics frequently point to sham elections and pseudo-democracy, it is very often precisely such illegitimate processes that spur mass-based challenges to authoritarian rule and open the door to real liberalization. Among such examples are Kyrgyzstan in early 2005¸Ukraine in 2004, Georgia in 2003, the 1986 presidential election in the Philippines, Chile's 1988 referendum on Pinochet, Nicaragua's election of 1990, the 2000 presidential election in Serbia and Montenegro (formerly the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), and Peru's tainted election of 2000.

In all these cases, an election or a referendum became the catalyst for the successful application of civic-based mobilization and resistance strategies. This is because major national elections and referenda offer a key opportunity for broad-based umbrella coalitions to reach critical mass. They create a timeframe in which civic and opposition political forces can concentrate resources, people power, and retain the discipline required to hold together broad-based coalitions. This means that pressure on states to

sustain electoral processes should remain a high priority of the diplomacy of democratic governments. It also means donors should give greater resources to civic election monitoring groups, political party training, independent polling, civic awareness campaigns and similar election related initiatives.

Additional Recommendations for U.S. Policy

1. No "Lost Causes." No country should be considered a "lost cause." Even in the most repressive regimes, I would argue that the U.S. can use diplomatic pressure to create greater political space, and, to the extent possible, support for those struggling for change to keep hope alive – especially for those inside the country.

2. Place Greater Emphasis on Non-Violent Civic-Based Resistance. The U.S. and other countries need to increase their focus on and support for nonviolent means of civic resistance, led by broad based coalitions that unite mature and skilled civic organizations and a citizenry that has been awakened to the misrule of their illegitimate leaders.

There is an urgent need for the international democratic community to better understand the importance of indigenous civic-based resistance directed at challenging authoritarian rule and spurring democratization. There is, likewise, the need to implement a paradigm shift in aid and democracy assistance priorities in order to promote and strengthen such movements with new resources and new aid initiatives. Toward this end, we need a deeper understanding of how democratic mobilization that results in system change differs from mobilization that can improve democratic practice in societies that have already undergone system changes. The first is really about pushing for a rotation of power where entrenched leadership will not compete or otherwise share power in a meaningful way. The second, and in some ways more challenging aspect of mobilization, is to consolidate democratic practice and to successfully accomplish the work of democratic governance. Georgia and Ukraine are in this second, very challenging phase right now. The United States and the world's democracies must help in whatever manner possible to see through the successful consolidation of democracy in these countries.

It is also important for policymakers to recognize that in most cases such investments in civic life are modest -- a matter of millions or tens of millions of dollars. Support for civic-based movements, therefore, is far less expensive than major military expenditures and far less costly than the normal bill for large development programs, the success of which can be undermined by unaccountable political leadership. Given the correlations between open, transparent, democratic societies and peace, as well as sustainable development, there is an urgent need for greater international commitment to funding this sector, especially in closed societies and fragile new democracies

3. Be Patient, Keep a Long-Term Focus while Reacting to Short-Term Opportunities.

While clearly the most recent examples show how rapidly transitions can happen, the work of building coalitions is a long-term effort. While we cannot precisely tie specific

assistance programs to outcomes in Ukraine, or Serbia, or Georgia, the civic movement in those countries was supported by years of outside funding and training aimed at creating a lattice work of independent non-governmental groups, supporting think tanks, assisting in political party training, advancing civic education, promoting democratic values through indigenous groups, sustaining independent media (where possible) and providing outside sources of unfettered information when free media cannot function inside a country.

Because such work is a long-term effort, it requires patience and a commitment to making modest, but long-term, investments.

4. Be Open, But Be Careful about Public Campaigns against Specific Regimes. This work should be undertaken and carried out as openly as possible (although in many totalitarian settings it is impossible for democracy assistance to be rendered openly without interference from the repressive state.) After all, what we are proposing is assistance to lawful organizations that have a right to operate in accordance with international human rights standards, including rights protecting press freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of peaceful demonstration and protest.

Openness is not the same thing as circumspection. As a matter of policy, it is best that broad initiatives in support of democracy and democratization be supported, rather than specific declarations that suggest a particular country is to be "targeted" for "regime change." The United States and the international community of democracies should not engage in grand proclamations about efforts to supplant one particular system or tyrant. Governments, donors, and democracy NGOS should simply proclaim the broad objective of helping empower citizens and giving them the capacity to govern themselves.

In the end, Mr. Chairman, there is no iron-clad formula to predict or target countries ripe for democratic change. And as we ponder the role that the U.S. and other countries can play in supporting the further expansion of democracy, we should also maintain a sense of humility. As history has shown again and again, it is the people of the countries themselves who often risk their lives to bring about democratic progress in their countries. Our role is to help support their efforts in the most effective way we can.